

### *Life of John Foster.*

Six days after the completion of his seventeenth year John became a member of the Baptist church, at Hebden Bridge. The venerable pastor, Dr. Fawcett, and other friends who had watched him up to this time with deep interest, now urged him to dedicate his talents to the ministry. He consented, and was "set apart" by a special religious service. For purposes of study he shortly afterwards became an inmate at Brearley Hall, where Dr. Fawcett then directed the studies of a few theological candidates. Part of each day, however, was spent in assisting his parents at their usual employments. During the rest of the time his mental exertions were intense. He thought deeply and read extensively, not only at Brearley, where he remained about three years, but at the Baptist College, Bristol, to which he afterwards removed. During the whole of his college curriculum he exhibited the same mental qualities by which he was so much distinguished in after life — an irrepressible curiosity to examine everything, great decision of character, an ambition of intellectual superiority, and a morbid desire to impart an air of novelty and freshness to old and familiar subjects, by striking out into original paths of illustration, or clothing them in the garb of an unwonted phraseology.

On leaving Bristol, the first place in which Foster was regularly engaged as a preacher was Newcastle-on-Tyne, where his Baptist flock was under fifty in number. Of his sermons it may be said that, in consequence of his straining after originality, his hearers were not unfrequently more startled and perplexed than edified\*. Once he discoursed from the text "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and his mode of treatment was so novel that an old man was overheard saying, "I don't know what he has been ^driving at all this afternoon, unless to set riddles/" "He is going to take us to the stars again/\*" was a frequent observation of his hearers. His style of preaching, it cannot be denied, though powerful, and a great treat to an intellectual audience, was little fitted to make an impression on the popular mind.

Foster remained at Newcastle little more than three months ; he left it about the end of November, 1792. We find him, soon after, ministering to a Baptist society which held its meetings in Swift's Alley, Dufelin. He did not prove a success there; the congregation was very small